NEWS ANALYSIS NO. 1-1989 DECEMBER 11, 1976
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NATO--AN OVERVIEW

ANNCR:

NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN REFLECTS ON THE SERIES OF BRUSSELS MEETINGS THIS (PAST) WEEK AMONG NATO'S FOREIGN AND DEFENSE MINISTERS.

VOICE: ANY DETACHED OBSERVER OF EVENTS AT THOSE MEETINGS CAN ONLY COME TO A GENERAL CONCLUSION--THAT THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE IS WELL AND HEALTHY. TO STATE IT IN OTHER TERMS--THE MEETINGS OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION'S DEFENSE AND FOREIGN MINISTERS PROVED TO BE AMONG THE MOST HARMONIOUS AND CONSTRUCTIVE IN NATO'S CLOSE TO THIRTY-YEAR HISTORY. THIS IS REFLECTED IN THE COMMUNIQUES ISSUED BY THE TWO SETS OF MINISTERS, ALONG WITH THE PROBLEMS WHICH NATO STILL FACES.

THE DEFENSE MINISTERS ARRIVED AT A CONSENSUS ON THE DESIRABILITY OF TIGHTENING THEIR EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS TO REACT AGAINST ANY SURPRISE ATTACK AGAINST THE ALLIANCE. A GROUP OF EXPERTS IS STUDYING THE MORE THAN TWO THOUSAND MILLION DOLLAR SYSTEM CALLED AWAC WHICH WOULD CLOSE A SERIOUS GAP IN THOSE EARLY WARNING DEFENSES, WITH A VIEW OF APPORTIONING THE COST FAIRLY AMONG ALL NATO MEMBERS.

THE FOREIGN MINISTERS REJECTED A WARSAW PACT SUGGESTION FOR A TREATY TO BAN FIRST STRIKE USE BY EITHER ALLIANCE AGAINST THE OTHER. THE NATO FOREIGN MINISTERS EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR A FLEXIBLE DEFENSE SYSTEM, AND CALLED THE WARSAW PACT'S PROPOSAL FOR A RENUNCIATION OF FIRST USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS UNACCEPTABLE. THE COMMUNIQUE MAKES TWO POINTS IN THIS CONNECTION. IT SAYS THAT THE NATO COUNTRIES CANNOT RENOUNCE THE USE OF ANY AVAILABLE MEANS TO DEFEND THEMSELVES. AND IT NOTES THAT THE U.N. CHARTER AND

THE FINAL ACT OF HELSINKI ON EUROPEAN SECURITY COMMITS ALL SIGNERS TO REJECT THE USE OF FORCE OR THREAT OF FORCE.

AND THEY REJECTED ANOTHER WARSAW PACT SUGGESTION THAT BOTH ALLIANCES FREEZE THEIR MEMBERSHIPS. THIS WAS SEEN BY THE NATO MINISTERS AS AIMED AGAINST SPAIN'S EVENTUAL INCLUSION IN NATO--ONCE DEMOCRACY IS FIRMLY ESTABLISHED THERE. IN FACT, THE MINISTERS CONCLUDED THAT THIS WARSAW PACT SUGGESTION RUNS COUNTER TO THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT ON EUROPEAN SECURITY, WHICH PROVIDES THAT ALL STATES ARE FREE TO JOIN ANY ALLIANCE OF THEIR CHOICE.

UNDERLYING ALL THIS, OF COURSE, IS THE CONCERN OF THE NATO PARTNERS AT THE CONTINUED BUILDUP OF SOVIET AND WARSAW PACT FORCES IN EUROPE AND EXPANSION OF THEIR ACTIVITIES TO OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD. SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER, IN HIS FAREWELL ADDRESS TO THE FOREIGN MINISTERS AND IN A SUBSEQUENT NEWS CONFERENCE UNDERLINED THE NATURE OF THIS THREAT. HE CALLED IT THE GREATEST LONG-RANGE THREAT FACING THE WESTERN NATIONS.

THE THRUST OF BOTH COMMUNIQUES IS THAT NATO IS SEEKING TO FIND A PROPER BALANCE BETWEEN IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNIST STATES OF EUROPE, WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY STRENGTHENING ITS DEFENSES AGAINST ANY POTENTIAL THREATS FROM THAT QUARTER. IT IS A CHALLENGE THAT WILL REQUIRE PERSEVERANCE AND DETERMINATION ON THE PART OF ALL NATO MEMBERS.

THAT THE UNITED STATES IS FULLY COMMITTED--NOW AND IN THE FUTURE--TO SUCH A COURSE, DOCTOR KISSINGER MADE CLEAR IN TWO WAYS. ONE WAS HIS RESTATEMENT OF THAT COMMITMENT FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE OUTGOING FORD ADMINISTRATION AS REFLECTED IN INCREASED NATO BUDGET REQUESTS. THE OTHER WAS A PLEDGE TO CONTINUE TO HONOR FULLY THE AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO NATO--A

PLEDGE CONTAINED IN A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT-ELECT JIMMY CARTER WHICH SECRETARY KISSINGER READ TO HIS NATO COLLEAGUES.

IT IS FOR ALL THESE REASONS THAT OBSERVERS HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THE JUST-ENDED NATO MEETINGS ACCOMPLISHED WHAT THEY WERE INTENDED TO DO--TO STRENGTHEN THE ALLIANCE THAT FOR SO MANY YEARS HAS SERVED AS A SHIELD FOR THE FREE NATIONS OF THE WORLD.

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